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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

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AMEMBASSY LISBON

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 4377

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AR, PO (GHIOLDI, AMERICO)

SUBJECT: NEW ARGENTINE AMBASSADOR TO PORTUGAL

1. BORN IN BUENOS AIRES ON MAY 23, 1899, AMERICO GHIOLDI, AT 77, IS ONE OF THE GRAND OLD MEN OF ARGENTINE SOCIALIST POLITICS. HIS POLITICAL CAREER BEGAN AT AGE 25 WHEN HE WAS ELECTED TO THE BUENOS AIRES MUNICIPAL COUNCIL ON THE SOCIALIST PARTY TICKET (1924-1930). THAT SAME YEAR HE BECAME DIRECTOR OF THE PARTY'S DAILY NEWSPAPER LA VANGUARDIA WHICH HE RAN FROM 1924-1947 AND AGAIN FROM 1955-1956. FROM 1947-1949 HE DIRECTED "EL SOCIALISTA" AND FROM 1957-1962 HE RAN THE SOCIALIST WEEKLY "AFIRMACION." AN OUTSPOKEN AND GREGARIOUS POLITICIAN, GHIOLDI WAS FOR YEARS THE MOST PROMINENT MEMBER OF THE ARGENTINE SOCIALIST PARTY'S RIGHT WING (HE RAN FOR VICE-PRESIDENT ON THE SOCIALIST PARTY TICKET WITH ALFREDO PALACIOS IN 1951) UNTIL HE BROKE OFF AND FORMED HIS OWN DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST PARTY (PSD) IN 1958. AS ONE OF MANY SPLINTERED SOCIALIST FACTIONS, MORE SOCIALIST IN NAME THAN CREED, THE PSD NEVER GARNERED AS MUCH INFLUENCE AND PRESTIGE AS DID ITS VENERABLE LEADER, WHO WAS HIGHLY RESPECTED IN POLITICAL CIRCLES AND HAS BEEN WELL KNOWN TO THIS EMBASSY FOR MANY YEARS. HE WAS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ON THE PSD TICKETS IN THE ELECTIONS OF 1973 BUT WON LESS THAN 1 PER CENT OF THE VOTE.

2. GHIOLDI WAS BY PROFESSION A SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER AND UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR (POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF LA PLATA, 1943; NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF BUENOS AIRES, 1956-1963); HOWEVER, MOST OF HIS LIFE WAS SPENT IN ACTIVE POLITICS AND
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POLITICAL JOURNALISM. HE WAS NATIONAL DEPUTY FOR THE SOCIALIST

PARTY FROM 1932-1943 AND AGAIN IN 1963-1966, THIS TIME FOR HIS OWN SOCIALIST DEMOCRATIC PARTY. HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL CONSULTING COMMISSION FROM 1955-1958 AND THE SOCIALIST DELEGATE TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY IN 1957. HE WAS KNOWN AS ONE OF THE ABLEST PARLIAMENTARIANS IN THE CONGRESS.

3. ALTHOUGH AN ACTIVE SPOKESMAN FOR THE SOCIALIST PARTY, GHIOLDI'S OWN VIEWS WERE MORE ECLECTIC. HE WAS KNOWN TO BE ARGENTLY PRO-WEST AND ANTI-COMMUNIST (BREAKING BITTERLY WITH HIS BROTHER RODOLFO, WHO WAS THE COMMUNIST PARTY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN THE 1951 ELECTIONS AND LATER MEMBER OF THE PARTY'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE), AND YET HE FAVORED LEGALIZATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY AS THE BEST WAY TO CONTROL IT. HE WAS OUTSPOKENLY ANTI-PERONIST BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER PERON'S FIRST ADMINISTRATION (1946-1955), WAS FREQUENTLY IMPRISONED IN THE 1943-1945 PERIOD AND FINALLY FORCED INTO EXILE IN MONTEVIDEO IN 1951.

4. GHIOLDI HAS OVER THE YEARS VIEWED MOST GOVERNMENTS WITH ALARM AND DISDAIN, WHILE HE BATTLED TO KEEP HIS MINISCULE PARTY AFLOAT (THE PSD WON A MERE 1.8 PER CENT OF THE VOTE IN THE NATIONAL CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES ELECTIONS IN 1965). HE DETESTED PRESIDENT FRONDIZI (1958-1962) AND WAS ONE OF SEVERAL POLITICIANS WHO PRIVATELY AND TO SOME EXTENT PUBLICLY PLOTTED FIRST TO DISPLACE FRONDIZI AND LATER TO POSTPONE ELECTIONS INDEFINITELY. ALTHOUGH HE DEPLORED MILITARY GOVERNMENTS, HE OFTEN SAID HE WAS WILLING TO WORK WITH THEM AND DECLARED ONCE THAT THE ARMED FORCES HAVE "THE RIGHT INSTINCTS." NEVERTHELESS, HE OPPOSED LT. GENERAL ONGANIA (PRESIDENT, 1966-1970), WHOM HE FOUND AUTHORITARIAN AND CLUMSY, AND WHO HE SAID HAD "NO IDEA OF HOW TO RUN A COUNTRY."

5. GHIOLDI BLAMED THE LONG SHADOW OF PERON FOR POISONING ARGENTINE POLITICAL LIFE AND PREDICTED (ACCURATELY) THAT NOTHING WOULD BE RESOLVED UNTIL THE ISSUE OF RETORNISMO--THE RETURN OF PERON TO ARGENTINA--WAS FACED. HE ALSO CORRECTLY FORECAST A VERY UNSTABLE PERIOD OF POLITICAL REORGANIZATION AFTER PERON'S DEATH.

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6. THE APPOINTMENT OF GHILDI AS AMBASSADOR IS SEEN HERE AS AN ATTEMPT OF THE RULING MILITARY JUNTA TO DRAW INTO THE GOVERNMENT WELL-KNOWN AND GENERALLY WELL-DISPOSED NATIONAL PERSONALITIES REPRESENTING VARIOUS POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS. THE AGING GHIOLDI HAS BEEN LESS POLITICALLY ACTIVE SINCE THE RETURN OF PERON IN 1973, ALTHOUGH, AS A MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST PARTY, HE CONTINUED HIS UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO FORGE A

SOCIALIST FEDERATION AND WIN BACK THOSE MODERATE SOCIALISTS
WHO HAVE DRIFTED AWAY TO OTHER SOCIALIST FACTIONS.

7. GHIOLDI IS MARRIED TO DELFINA VARELA DOMINGUEZ, A
POLITICAL JOURNALIST AND UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR WHO WAS ACTIVE
IN SOCIALIST POLITICS IN HER OWN RIGHT. THEY HAVE ONE SON,
AMERICO, JR., WHO TOOK HIS MASTER'S DEGREE IN INDUSTRIAL
ENGINEERING AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN NEW YORK AND HAS WORKED
IN THE U.S. GHILLDI APPARENTLY DID RESEARCH IN THE U.S. AND
FRANCE MANY YEARS AGO AND HAS TRAVELED TO THE UK AND ELSEWHERE
REPRESENTING HIS PARTY IN SOCIALIST CONVENTIONS.
ALTHOUGH HE SUFFERED A HEART ATTACK IN THE LATE 1960'S, HE
IS APPARENTLY IN GOOD HEALTH. HE SPEAKS ONLY SPANISH.
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